

THE IMPORTANCE OF BUILDING PERMITS

A RESIDENT TELLS HIS STORY

ON MAY 30, 1998, BLOOMINGTON WAS HIT hard by a wind and hail storm that left behind 10,000 dump truck loads of brush and debris, and totaled \$1.2 million in public cleanup costs. Most of the shingle roofs in Bloomington were damaged, attracting many contractors from outside the area. The majority were legitimate, but a few were not.

Longtime resident David called several contractors to repair his roof, including one contractor whose ad appeared in the local paper.

“The Better Business Bureau had nothing bad to report and their estimate was in line with my insurance company,” David said. “The workers came out and removed and installed the shingles in one day.”

Four months later, David read an article on being wary of contractors who don’t post permits when doing work. He remembered paying the contractor for a City permit, but didn’t recall it being posted.

“I contacted the City and discovered that no building permit had been issued,” David said. “A City inspector called the contractor to remind them it was illegal to do work without a permit, but we never heard back from them.”

David soon learned the contractor had filed for bankruptcy. City building inspectors found many violations when



they inspected David’s roof. Shingles were incorrectly overlapped, the bathroom vent had been covered and the code-required ice and water shield was never installed.

Because David had hired a licensed contractor, he was eventually able to recover most of his loss from the Minnesota Department of Commerce Contractor Relief Fund. However, the process of getting a judgment against the contractor in order to be reimbursed took almost a year.

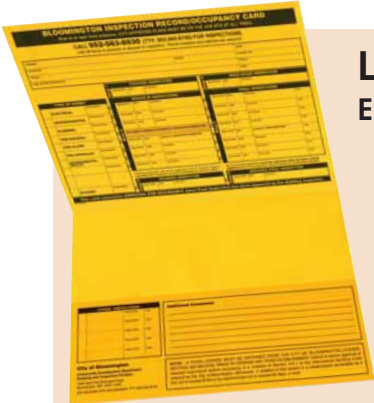
“I had to hire an attorney,” he said. “It was very frustrating and it took a lot of time.”

In the end, David said he learned a valuable lesson and offered a few suggestions for residents who are hiring contractors.

“Don’t just take the word of the contractor,” David said. “Ask a lot of questions, get referrals, hire only licensed contractors and make sure you see the City’s orange permit posted when they are performing work.”

In addition, don’t let contractors talk you into applying for the permit yourself. When contractors apply for the permit, they are directly responsible for correcting any code violations the City inspectors identify.

For more information or for a handout on hiring a contractor, call Building and Inspection at 952-563-8930 or visit the City’s Web site at www.ci.bloomington.mn.us, keywords: Handouts.



LOOK FOR THE ORANGE CARD

ENSURE A SAFE AND HAPPY BUILDING PROJECT

To protect your health and safeguard the integrity of your home, permits are issued when a remodeling project involves construction. The City’s orange permit card lets you know the contractor has purchased a permit for your project and allows you to monitor inspections as they are completed. Once the project has started, the permit card must be displayed on site at all times. A final inspection must be done for every permit. It is your contractor’s responsibility to schedule the required inspections. A card is not issued for minor plumbing, heating or electrical work. Inspectors will leave comments as to whether the inspection passed or failed.

CLEANING UP AFTER WINTER

STREET SWEEPING BEGINS

AROUND THE FIRST WEEK OF APRIL, Street Maintenance launches its annual spring-cleaning campaign to rid city streets of debris, dirt and sand left over from a winter of ice control. A clean sweep of all Bloomington streets takes about six to eight weeks.

Crews work two weekday shifts, beginning at 4 a.m. and ending at 8 p.m.

To protect the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District and other water bodies from pollutants, streets in those areas are swept first, then crews move into neighborhoods. Sweeping starting points are rotated each year.

Sand and debris collected by street-sweeping crews are sent through a screener/shredder unit for sorting and

cleaning. Cleaned sand is later reused for ice control on streets.

Remember to keep a safe distance from street-cleaning equipment in operation. For more information, call 952-563-8760.



SWEEPING TECHNOLOGY

As Maintenance crews sweep city streets this spring, residents can check their progress on the City’s Web site. Get up-to-date information on the street sweeping schedule by using an interactive map of Bloomington. Visit www.ci.bloomington.mn.us, keywords: My World.

CITY APPOINTS NEW FIRE MARSHAL

DUGAL HEADS FIRE PREVENTION

GENE DUGAL WAS APPOINTED THE City’s Fire Marshal on February 9. A Bloomington Fire Inspector since 1991,



he has more than 20 years experience in fire protection. Dugal served 20 years as a volunteer firefighter

for the City and as a fire station captain for 12 years. Dugal also tested and inspected the fire safety systems of the Mall of America during its construction.

The Fire Marshal oversees the Fire Prevention Division that conducts more than 2,200 inspections a year of commercial and industrial buildings, hotels, schools and multifamily dwellings for compliance with state fire and building codes.

“The City requires fire safety systems in buildings because they save lives, prevent serious injury and protect property,” Dugal said. “It’s our job to ensure that these systems operate properly when there is a fire.”

Fire Prevention’s primary responsibilities include:

- Ensuring that new buildings are equipped to combat the spread of fire with protections such as sprinklers, fire doors and separation walls that are built into structures.
- Ensuring that exit signs, emergency lights and visual and audible fire alarms are in place to help people leave a building if a fire starts.
- Educating the public, including school children, senior citizens and commercial property owners, on ways to prevent fires, the importance of fire alarms and sprinkler systems, and evacuation procedures in an emergency. Bloomington’s award-winning work ranges from fireworks safety instruction to showing families how to prepare children to react promptly if there is a fire in the home.
- Investigating the cause of fires, and, when there is evidence of arson, working cooperatively with the Police Department to make sure the arsonist is identified, charged and convicted. Bloomington has an excellent track record of prosecuting arson cases.

Community Development Director Larry Lee said, “Gene was promoted to Fire Marshal because he has outstanding knowledge of fire prevention, is well-respected by his peers and has the background to carry on the Fire Prevention Division’s tradition of excellence.”

Visit the City’s Web site at www.ci.bloomington.mn.us, keywords: Fire Prevention, for more information on the division and ways you can protect yourself and your family from fires.